



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



SDNG DEPLOYS AVIATION UNIT TO HORN OF AFRICA

Family, friends and soldiers gathered at the Army Aviation Readiness Center for a deployment ceremony for seven soldiers of the South Dakota Army National Guard's Detachment 5, Company C, 2/641st Aviation Regiment, June 11.

The Rapid City-based unit is deploying for nine months to Djibouti to provide transportation and air movement of critical equipment, supplies, parts and personnel in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

"Thank you for stepping up to serve and doing it in a way that is inspirational," said Gov. Kristi Noem. "You've been trained with excellence and you have what it takes to get the job done. We have full confidence in you." She then thanked South Dakota National Guard Soldiers and their families for their contributions and the service to the state of South Dakota. The unit will deploy in support of Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa to provide aviation support in the region. The 2/641st is a fixed-wing aviation unit comprised of pilots and operations specialists, and operates the C-12, King Air.

"You are patriots; time and time again you step forward to serve and so thank you to each of you for what you've done and what you are about to do," said SDNG Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Jeff Marlette, "This coyote patch is revered around the world and we are very proud of you."

This will be the unit's first deployment to the Horn of Africa. The 2/641st has three previous deployments to Afghanistan, which include passenger and cargo transport missions in 2008, as well as intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions in 2011 and 2015.

The unit will report to Fort Bliss, Texas, to complete theater-specific training prior to deployment to Djibouti.

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SD BRIDGE TO BE DEDICATED IN HONOR OF SPC MARK HORNER

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs will be hosting a State Bridge Dedication Ceremony to honor Combat Veteran SPC Mark Horner.

The ceremony will be held Saturday, July 3, 2021, at 10:00 am (CT) at the BG Ernie Edwards Readiness Center in Watertown (1951 N. HWY 20).

The South Dakota HWY 20 Bridge over the Lake Kampeska outlet will be dedicated to SPC Horner, of Watertown. Horner was killed in action on February 15, 1970, when he encountered hostile forces while on a combat operation in Vietnam near the Cambodian border.

Naming bridges in honor of our combat veterans who died while serving their country is an initiative of Governor Kristi Noem and the South Dakota Departments of Military, Transportation, and Veterans Affairs.

“Whenever and wherever this nation has called, in times of darkness and danger, as well as in times of peace and prosperity, veterans have been there and have proudly carried the torch of liberty for all to see,” said Greg Whitlock, secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs.

“Our fallen heroes are no longer with us, but their memory lives on in the hearts of their loved ones and our state,” said Whitlock. “Naming our South Dakota bridges in honor of our fallen will give us an opportunity of remembrance, reflection, and respect—for honoring the men and women who gave their lives in service to this nation. They cherished liberty and loved freedom enough to lay down their lives to preserve our way of life.”



\$2.1 MILLION GIFTED TO SD VETERANS CEMETERY FOUNDATION

Philanthropists T. Denny Sanford, and PREMIER Bankcard CEO Miles Beacom and his wife Lisa recently provided a \$2.1 million gift to the South Dakota Veterans Council's South Dakota Veterans Cemetery Foundation. The fund is held and managed by the South Dakota Community Foundation.

Beacom said the gift was a fitting way to thank South Dakota's veterans and families for their service and sacrifice.

"Denny Sanford, Lisa, and I are honored to be a part of this project," Beacom said. "We are truly indebted to the brave men and women who have served our great nation, and this is simply our way of saying thank you. One of our PREMIER views and values is, 'Make a Difference'. This gift is truly a way that we can make a difference in the lives of those who have given so much to all of us."

"This generous donation speaks to the incredible work being done across our state for veterans and their families," said Terry Paulsen, president of the South Dakota Veterans Council. "I can't thank these individuals enough for believing in our commitment to building and maintaining this new cemetery. This support will add to the existing funds already raised and will help satisfy the \$3 million goal required for the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery Annual Maintenance Reserve Fund."

SD APPROPRIATORS VISIT STATE VETERANS CEMETERY

Members of the South Dakota Legislative Appropriations Committee toured the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery this week.

SDDVA Secretary Greg Whitlock, Deputy Secretary Aaron Pollard, and Cemetery Director Erin Brown briefed the legislators and answered questions legislators had.



SPECIAL THANKS RCPT TEAM

Just saying "thank you" will never be enough to express our sincere appreciation to the River Cities Public Transit team! They are one of a kind. Not only have they partnered with our counties and tribes to provide transportation for veterans to and from their medical appointments, but they stepped up and provided transportation for the Memorial Day/Ribbon Cutting ceremony at the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery in Sioux Falls Memorial Day weekend. What a team!!!!

Visit: <https://www.rcptransit.com/veterans/> to learn more about their great transportation program for veterans.



HARDING RETIRES FROM DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY

Steve Harding retired June 8, after dedicating over 30 years of service to the State of South Dakota. Most recently, Harding served as the deputy secretary for the South Dakota Department of the Military.

Throughout this tenure with the state, Harding represented the Department on numerous local, regional, and state committees, commissions, and boards. He also dedicated his time, talents, and expertise by serving the City of Pierre as a commissioner and currently, as the mayor. In addition, Harding dedicated

34 years to the South Dakota Army National Guard, retiring as a Colonel.

Harding will now have some free time to hunt, fish, travel, and address all those items on the "honey do" list!

Connie Hohn, is the new deputy secretary for the Department of the Military.



ELIGIBILITY FOR VET CENTER SERVICES

Public Law (PL) 116-176—Vet Center Eligibility Expansion Act, extends Vet Center eligibility to certain members of the Armed Forces, including the National Guard and Reserve component members who actively served in response to a national emergency or major disaster declared by the president or under orders of the chief executive of a state in response to a disaster or civil disorder. In addition, Vet Center services are now available to current or former members of the United States Coast Guard (USCG) involved in drug interdiction operations, regardless of where the drug interdiction occurred.



Family services are provided when found to aid in the readjustment of the Service Member.

For more information, please call Vet Center Outreach Specialist Doug McCuddin at 605-330-4552.

BENNETT AND KRAUS TO COVER VETERANS SERVICES IN JERAULD COUNTY

Effective July 1, 2021, Craig Bennett and Alex Kraus will be working with veterans in Jerauld County. Roger Dwyer is retiring at the end of June.

The Davison Duo will now be assisting veterans and their families in Davison, Jerauld, and Sanborn Counties.

Bennett hopes to have staff in Jerauld County on the first, second, and fourth Wednesdays and in Sanborn County on the third Wednesdays of each month.



VA SEEKS INCREASE IN ACADEMIC RELATIONSHIPS WITH MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTIONS TO EXPAND TRAINING

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs hosted the 2021 Minority Summit: The Power of Collaborating with VA, June 9, to strengthen and expand its relationships with minority-serving colleges, universities, medical schools, and professional organizations.

The VA's Office of Academic Affiliations hosted more than 700 participants in a collaborative effort to increase academic affiliations with minority-serving institutions to create a more diverse cadre of health professions trainees to learn and care for veteran patients at the VA.

Summit discussions centered around affiliation, scholarship, and research opportunities available through the VA. Included were panels comprised of representatives from the VA and academia, remarks by VA Secretary Denis McDonough, and a keynote address from Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Clinical Services and Chief Medical Officer of the Veterans Health Administration Kameron Matthews, M.D., J.D.

"Veterans are one of the most diverse populations, representing America in all its strength, a wealth of races, ethnicities, genders, and geographic and cultural backgrounds," said McDonough. "It's vital we build a workforce that reflects the diverse population we serve – not only because it's the right thing to do, but because doing so will save lives. The VA has affiliations with more than 200 minority-serving institutions across the country to train health professionals for the VA and the nation, and we look forward to establishing even more partnerships to fulfill our mission."

The VA has made strides in broadening diversity in the workforce and with its trainees.

The Veterans Health Administration is the largest education and training program for health professionals in the U.S. working with 97% of the country's medical schools and more than 1,800 universities and colleges. Each year, 120,000 trainees in over 40 clinical health profession education programs, including nearly 20,000 students from minority-serving institutions, train in a VHA facility. Approximately 70% of the country's physicians have participated in training at the VA.

Learn more about VHA's mission of training health care professionals at the [Office of Academic Affiliations](#) and viewing this [video](#).

SANFORD HEALTH MILITARY AND VETERAN SCHOLARSHIP

Sanford Health wants to remind everyone of their annual scholarship opportunity specifically for veterans, Guard/Reserve members or active duty military service members who have demonstrated leadership and commitment in their community.

The Sanford Health Military and Veteran Scholarship honors those who have furthered their own progress and enriched the lives of others, especially in service, academics, and community involvement.

Applications are due Aug. 31, 2021 and can be found at: https://SanfordHealthFound.smapply.io/prog/sanford_health_military_and_veteran_scholarship.

Applicants must be a veteran, Guard/Reserve or active duty military service member and a full-time student pursuing a community college/vocational, bachelor's, graduate or professional degree from an accredited U.S.-based institution of higher education. They must also have at least one full year of education remaining.

The scholarships are administered by the Sanford Health Department of Veterans and Military Services and was created in 2018 as part of the health system's efforts to serve veterans and military personnel through patient care, employment opportunities, and community outreach.

Additionally, the Good Samaritan Society supports lifelong learning. Financial support is available for employees who are continuing education in a field that will enhance their contributions to Sanford and those they serve.

You can learn more about education assistance and other scholarships at this link. <https://news.sanfordhealth.org/veterans/sanford-health-offering-5000-scholarship-to-veterans/>.



SDDVA PARTICIPATES IN OUTREACH EVENTS

SDDVA Field Service Officer Kevin Bowen participated in the "Operation Chow Line" outreach event in Huron June 9th. There were several veterans organizations, including the Sioux Falls VA Health Care, Volunteers of America, the Vet Center, and a few others participating as vendors at this outreach event. It was estimated that there were about 72 veterans and family members that showed up and ate and talked to the people at the booths.



SDDVA Field Service Officer Will Huffmon attended the VABHHCS Stand Down at Pine Ridge last week. Over 100 veterans and family members participated in this outreach event.

SDDVA Field Service Officer Kevin Swanson participated in the VABHHCS Stand Down in Eagle Butte this week.



MIDWEST HONOR FLIGHT HONOR RIDE

Well over 100 bikers and vehicles participated in the Midwest Honor Flight Honor Ride this past weekend in Sioux Falls. The event started at the South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance, traveled on to the Sioux Falls VA Hospital campus and ended at the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery. The event raised enough funds to send eight veterans on one of the upcoming flights.



Aaron Van Beek, president and director of Midwest Honor Flight, announced that MHF will be partnering with the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery to provide wreaths for heroes buried at the cemetery as part of the Wreaths Across America program. The program at the SD Veterans Cemetery will be held December 18 at 11:00 am (CT).

MIDWEST HONOR FLIGHT TO BE PARTNERING ORGANIZATION FOR SD VETERANS CEMETERY

The Midwest Honor Flight announced they will be the partnering organization to host the annual Wreaths Across America event at the new South Dakota Veteran Cemetery in December.

"It's more than simply decorating graves," said Midwest Honor Flight President Aaron Van Beek. "It's a silent message to all veterans, their families, and those currently serving that we will REMEMBER their service, we will HONOR their lives, and we will TEACH future generations the importance of citizenship and how our freedoms have been preserved over time. We understand we have Veterans Day in the fall and Memorial Day in the spring, but our service members sacrifice their time and safety every single day of the year to preserve our freedoms. There is no better time to express our appreciation than during the hustle and bustle of the holiday season."

The tradition of laying wreaths to honor our veterans during the holiday season began in 1992, when Morrill Worcester of Worcester Wreath Company (Harrington, Maine) was stuck with a number of extra wreaths at the close of the holiday season. Remembering a boyhood trip to the Nation's Capital, and the sacred grounds of Arlington National Cemetery, he donated 5,000 wreaths to be placed at the headstones of an older section of the cemetery.

What began as one man's gesture, has now grown into a national movement - when in 2007 Wreaths Across America was formed as a non-profit. Today, more than 2,500 locations participate on a Saturday in December in laying the wreaths out of remembrance and respect for our nation's brave servicemen and women.

"The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs is looking forward to working with Wreaths Across America and Midwest Honor Flight in a special way at the Cemetery to honor the Veterans here with a token of appreciation during the holiday season and ultimately, all year long," said South Dakota Veterans Cemetery Director Erin Brown.

Midwest Honor Flight partnered with Wreaths Across America in 2021 to bring this program to veterans whose final resting place is within these hallowed grounds. Sponsorships are 100% tax-deductible allowed by law. Sponsorships and more information can be found by visiting www.midwesthonorflight.org/wreaths, emailing wreaths@midwesthonorflight.org, or calling (605) 215-1319.





South Dakota Veterans Cemetery



Our Mission: Remember, Honor, Teach

**Your donation will help us carry out our
Mission to honor our local servicemembers**

Saturday, December 18, 2021 at 11:00 AM

South Dakota Veterans Cemetery — Sioux Falls, SD

www.midwesthonorflight.org/wreaths | Facebook @sdveteranscemeterywaa

2021 Wreath Sponsorship Form

Please postmark all sponsorships by Saturday, November 20, 2021 to be received in time for this year's ceremony.

Name or Company* _____

Address _____ Phone _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Email _____

Midwest Honor Flight and Wreaths Across America do not sell, rent, or otherwise disclose any personal information.

***Name or company line above will be used to list you as a sponsor in the program.**

Wreath Sponsorship

| Sponsorship Type | Price | Quantity | Total |
|--|------------|----------|-------|
| Individual = 1 Wreath | \$15.00 | | |
| Family = 4 Wreaths | \$60.00 | | |
| Small Business = 10 Wreaths | \$150.00 | | |
| Corporate = 100 Wreaths | \$1,500.00 | | |
| Patriot Pair = 1 Wreath Shipped to you, 1 Wreath to honor a Veteran | \$50.00 | | |
| Grand Total Due Payable to Wreaths Across America: | | | |

If you would like to sponsor using a secure, online credit card transaction, please visit our website at: www.midwesthonorflight.org/wreaths

Remembering a Veteran...

Grave specific requests can be listed below. Donations without grave specific requests or if there are more wreaths sponsored than specifics will go towards other veterans. Please include their section and row below.

Honoring an Active Duty Service Member...

These requests will not be placed on a specific veteran's grave—merely a way to honor those serving.

Make checks payable to: **Wreaths Across America**

Send form and payment to: **Midwest Honor Flight**

Find us on Facebook: facebook.com/sdveteranscemeterYWAA

P.O. Box 22

Find out more about our program: midwesthonorflight.org/wreaths

Sioux Center, IA 51250

DSS LAUNCHES PROGRAM TO HELP WITH BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COSTS

The South Dakota Department of Social Services (DSS) recently launched the 'Behavioral Health Voucher Program', offering funding assistance and support for mental health and substance use services.

"South Dakotans across the state continue to experience ongoing difficulties in many aspects of daily life," said DSS Cabinet Secretary Laurie Gill. "The Behavioral Health Voucher Program helps alleviate the barrier of treatment costs and encourages people to get the help they need."

The program is an extension of the 605 Strong programs created to help connect South Dakotans with basic needs, financial assistance opportunities, government information, and mental health and family resources. Funded through a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the program will be managed by the DSS Division of Behavioral Health.

Unique to the program is the addition of private counseling agency participation in the program.

"I look forward to participating in the Behavioral Health Voucher Program and especially partnering with DSS," said Debi Dusseault, owner and clinical therapist of Shelterbelt Counseling, LLC. "Many more clients will be able to receive quality mental health services at a provider of their choosing."

Presently, more than 50 mental health and/or substance use providers have enrolled to participate in the program. To learn how to become a participating provider, visit dss.sd.gov.

For persons in need of receiving a voucher for mental health and/or substance use services, visit 605strong.com or contact the HelpLine at 211.

STRENGTH TAKES COURAGE.

No matter who you are, your life has been impacted by COVID-19. Thousands of people across South Dakota are facing challenges unlike any they have ever experienced. If you feel overwhelmed in your situation or are struggling with emotions like anxiety, depression, stress, sadness or fear, you are not alone. Your feelings are an understandable human response before, during and after a crisis situation. Finding a healthy way to work through these feelings is important for you and everyone around you.





PTSD Awareness Trail Walk June 30th (Wednesday at 10:00am)

Sioux Falls Vet Center

**Relax your
Mind, Move
your Body!!!**

Sioux Falls Vet Center

3200 W. 49th St.
Sioux Falls SD, 57106

Phone: (605)330-4552

**The Sioux Falls Vet Center invites you to meet up for
a 27 minute remembrance walk from Pasley Park to
Spencer Dog Park and back!**

**Register for a PTSD Awareness Event and get a FREE
Bib!!!**

https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/awareness/virtual_walk.asp

**Bring your spouse, a friend, or child along!
Please sign up with Doug today!**

UPCOMING EVENTS

Jun 17-20—VFW 91st State Convention—Kelly Inn (1607 E. HWY 50)—Yankton
 Jun 24-27—American Legion State Convention—Crossroads (100 4th ST SW)—Huron
 Jun 30—Vet Center PTSD Awareness Trail Walk—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (MT)
 Jul 17—Tribute to Fallen Soldiers—Military Heritage Alliance Building (1600 W. Russell Street)—Sioux Falls—
 Doors open at 5:00 pm (CT)—Social—6:30 pm (CT) and Dinner—7:00 pm (CT)
 Jul 21—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—Military Heritage Alliance Building—Sioux Falls—9:00 am (CT)
 Jul 24—Tomb of the Unknown Soldier 100th Anniversary Commemoration—Military Heritage Alliance (1600 W.
 Russell Street) —Sioux Falls
 Aug 16-18—SDDVA Annual Benefits School—Ramkota Hotel—Pierre
 Aug 23—Midwest Honor Flight Fundraiser at Barrel House (4701 E. 54th Street)—Sioux Falls
 Sep 18—Midwest Honor Flight—Mission 7
 Sep 18—Midwest Honor Flight Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center Arena—9:15 pm (CT)
 Doors Open at 7:30 pm (CT)
 Oct 9—Midwest Honor Flight—Mission 8
 Oct 9—Midwest Honor Flight Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center Arena—8:45 pm (CT)
 Doors Open at 7:00 pm (CT)
 Oct 23—Midwest Honor Flight Hangar Dance at the South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance (1600 W. Russell
 Street)—Sioux Falls
 Dec 18—Wreaths Across America—South Dakota Veterans Cemetery—11:00 am (CT)



Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer
 South Dakota Department of the Military <https://military.sd.gov/>
 South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov>
 Soldiers and Sailors Building - 425 E Capitol Avenue
 Pierre, SD 57501
 Phone: 605-773-8242
 E-mail address: audry.ricketts@state.sd.us

